

SENECA VILLAGE

Toward a Permanent
Commemoration



An aerial photograph of Central Park in New York City, showing its green spaces and winding paths. Overlaid on the park is a historical map from 1857, which shows the layout of the land before the park was established. The map features a grid of streets and numerous small red squares indicating property boundaries or structures. The map is semi-transparent, allowing the modern aerial view to be seen through it. On the left side of the image, a dark vertical bar contains white text labels for specific streets. On the right side, a dark rectangular box contains white text providing historical context.

W 88th St

W 86th St

W 84th St

W 82nd St

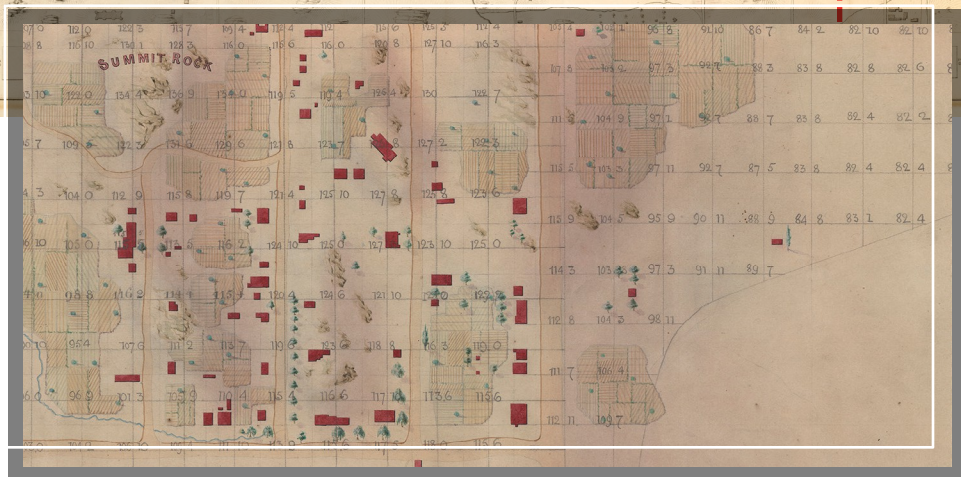
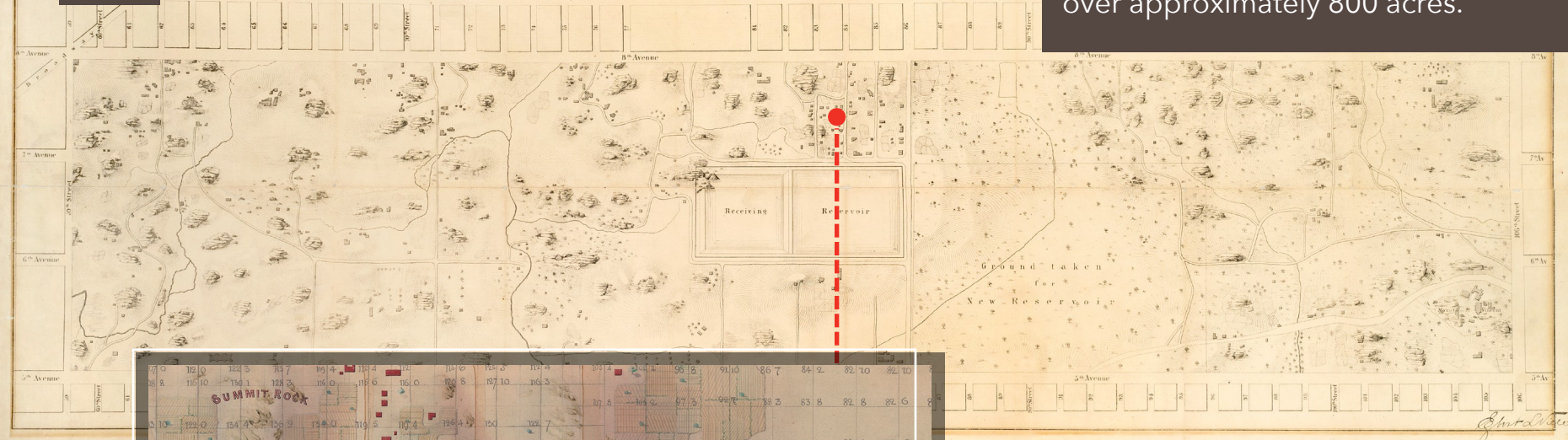
Before Central Park, the landscape along what is now the Park's perimeter from approximately West 82nd to 89th Street was home to a predominantly African-American community (2/3 Black, 1/3 Irish) known as Seneca Village.

Seneca Village had three churches, a school, and high rates of property ownership, which in some cases made male owners eligible to vote. When the City acquired the land for the park in 1857, its residents were displaced and forgotten.

1856

MAP of the lands included in THE CENTRAL PARK, Topog

The pre-park landscape was home to about 1,600 residents spread over approximately 800 acres.



Seneca Village (1855), home to an estimated 225 residents.

LONG-TERM GOAL

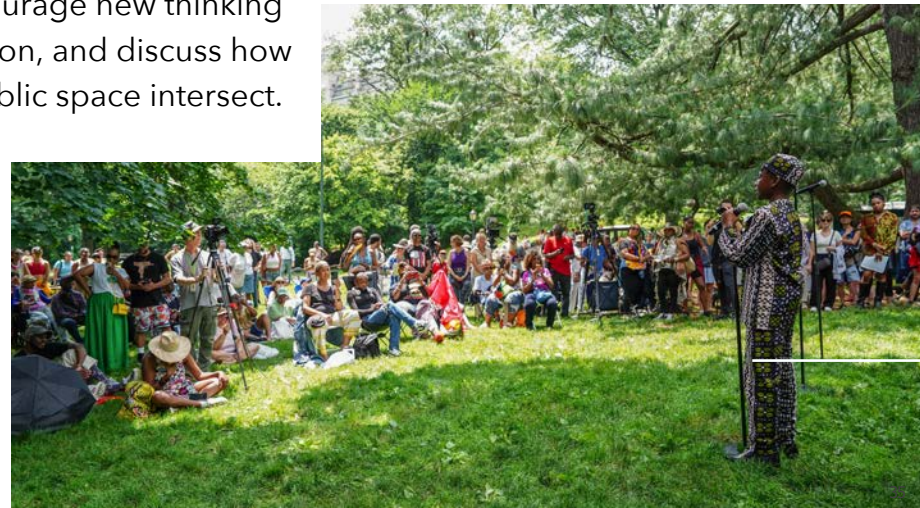
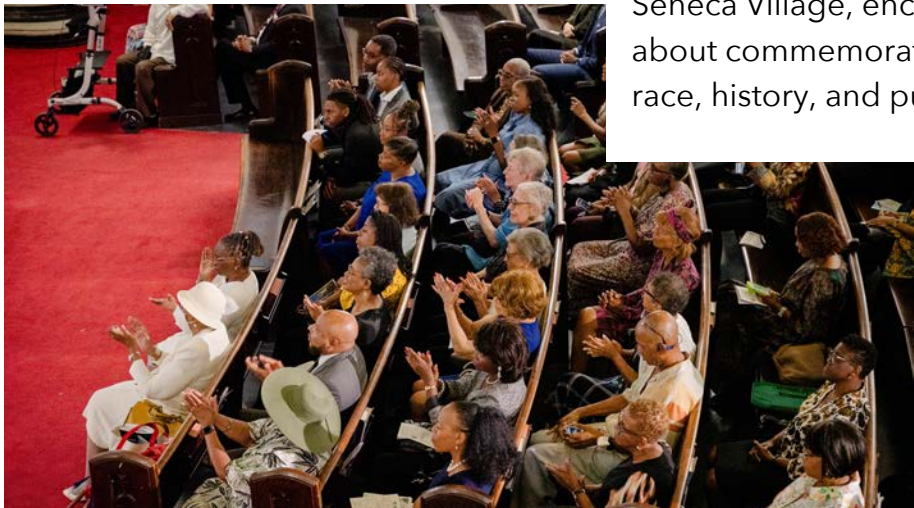
Design a permanent commemorative element for Seneca Village in Central Park that celebrates its history, inspires reflection, and publicly situates Seneca Village as a site of significance in American history.

PROCESS

Engage partners and community stakeholders to share the history of Seneca Village and facilitate conversations about why it matters, what we are honoring, and what we aim to achieve.



Launched in 2025, the 200th anniversary of Seneca Village, we will host two years of programs to deepen awareness of Seneca Village, encourage new thinking about commemoration, and discuss how race, history, and public space intersect.



LEARN MORE: centralparknyc.org/seneca-village

Seneca Village Tours

Discover Seneca Village, the largest community of free African-American property owners in pre-Civil War New York.



Free Educators' Tours

This tour is free of charge for NYC educators. Please register using your school email address.

